

Introduced by Senator Steinberg
(Principal coauthor: Assembly Member Jones)
(Coauthor: Assembly Member Nunez)

February 22, 2008

An act relating to state preschool programs.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 1629, as introduced, Steinberg. State preschool programs: early learning quality improvement system.

Existing law requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction to administer state preschool programs, including part-day and preschool appropriate programs for prekindergarten children 3 to 5 years of age, inclusive, in educational development, health services, social services, nutritional services, parent education and participation, evaluation, and staff development.

This bill would express the Legislature's intent to enact legislation to establish a commission to create an early learning quality improvement system, as specified.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: no.
State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

- 1 SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the
- 2 following:
- 3 (a) Learning begins at the earliest stages of life and research
- 4 shows that preschool is a proven investment in the academic
- 5 success of children and their success later in life. A high-quality
- 6 preschool system would benefit California children, the state's

1 systems of public and higher education, its families and students,
2 and its economy overall.

3 (b) Effective preschool provides eager young learners with early
4 academic and social skills that prepare them for later learning.
5 Developing these skills requires developmentally appropriate,
6 intentional instruction from skilled teachers.

7 (c) Unfortunately, too many children are turned away from
8 preschool, and the children who lack access to preschool are
9 disproportionately children of color, children whose home language
10 is not English, and children whose parents did not graduate from
11 high school. Research has shown that only one-half of all eligible
12 children in California are enrolled in a state preschool or the federal
13 Head Start program.

14 (d) Currently, California's preschool programs consist of both
15 state and federally funded programs for the provision of part-day
16 and full-day preschool and child care.

17 (e) According to the National Institute of Early Education
18 Research, California's state preschool programs meet only four of
19 10 benchmarks for quality preschool. A vast body of research
20 shows that only high-quality preschool results in the child outcomes
21 and cost-benefits widely attributed to preschool.

22 (f) The myriad of state child development programs that serve
23 children 3 to 5 years of age, inclusive, are unnecessarily complex;
24 programs are not rewarded or given enough support to achieve the
25 high-quality learning environments that our most disadvantaged
26 children need and deserve.

27 (g) In order to take full advantage of the integral role that a
28 quality preschool system plays in helping prepare children for
29 school, which would benefit the state's most vulnerable pupils and
30 children from low-income families, including English language
31 learners, California must create a more coherent and efficient
32 publicly funded preschool program and lay the groundwork for
33 high quality. Consolidating and streamlining the state's preschool
34 program within existing revenues and expenditures and creating
35 a system that rewards programs that provide higher quality learning
36 environments would greatly increase California's ability to bridge
37 the achievement gap.

38 (h) Making the necessary investments to expand the state's
39 preschool system while the state faces a budget shortfall will be
40 difficult, but important steps can be taken now to put in place the

1 framework for a high-quality prekindergarten system upon which
2 future expansion can be built.

3 SEC. 2. It is the intent of the Legislature to enact legislation
4 that would do the following:

5 (a) Establish a commission to create an early learning quality
6 improvement system to develop a framework for assessing program
7 quality and a tiered reimbursement framework that provides the
8 necessary resources for programs to achieve higher quality and
9 that provides the support and opportunity for teachers to reach
10 higher levels of educational attainment.

11 (b) Require the commission to ensure that there is a process for
12 meaningful public input prior to submitting its recommendations
13 and that the quality improvement system will be phased in as funds
14 are available.